

BAKER, ELIAS HOUSE  
(Baker Mansion)  
Allegheny Furnace  
Union Avenue and Crescent Road  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6065

HABS  
PA  
7-ALTO,  
162-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ELIAS BAKER HOUSE  
(Baker Mansion)  
Allegheny Furnace

HABS No. PA-6065

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PA  
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Location: Union Avenue and Crescent Road  
Altoona, Blair County  
Pennsylvania

UTM: 17 E.719740 N.4485420  
Quad: Hollidaysburg  
Scale: 1:24,000

Date of Construction: 1846-48

Present Owner: Blair County Historical Society.

Present Use: Library.

Significance: Designed by Baltimore architect Robert Carey for Elias Baker, a prominent ironmaster who operated Allegheny Furnace, near the Baker house, and Indiana Furnace, near Armagh in Indiana County.

Historian: Nancy Shedd, 1987.

Project Information: The results of the study of Cambria County were published in 1990: Fitzsimons, Gray, editor, Blair County and Cambria County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP) and HABS/HAER, National Park Service). The contents of the publication were transmitted to the Library of Congress as individual reports. Research notes, field photos and copies of historic photos collected during the project were transmitted to the AIHP Collection, Special Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705.

## History

In 1835, Elias Baker and Roland Diller of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, purchased the abandoned Allegheny Furnace near Mill Run, north of Hollidaysburg. To supervise the iron making operation Baker relocated to Allegheny Furnace. The newly completed Pennsylvania Canal provided vastly improved transportation and increased manufacturing opportunities in the Juniata iron region. Despite economic difficulties following the Panic of 1837, Baker's iron furnace operation grew in the 1840s. His prosperity in the iron business permitted him to construct one of the largest, most ornate ironmaster's houses in the region. Begun in 1846 and completed in 1848, the Baker House was designed in the Greek Revival style by architect Robert Cary Long, Jr. The two-story stone residence is situated a top of a hill overlooking the furnace. Its south facade features a two-story portico, with fluted cast-iron columns and large Ionic columns.

After Elias Baker's death in 1854, his son, Sylvester C. Baker, assumed charge of the iron furnace. Sylvester converted the former charcoal-fired furnace to coke in 1867. The furnace was producing 50 to 80 tons of pig iron per week just before its final blow in the 1870s. Although the furnace was abandoned well before the turn of the century, the Baker family continued to live in the large house until 1914. Eight years later the Baker Mansion was acquired by the Blair County Historical Society, which continues to house its museum and a small archives in the building.